THE SOCIAL & POLITICAL DEPENDENCE OF WOMEN.

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WOMEN.

Ἴσως δή, εἶπον, παρὰ τὸ ἔθος γελοῖα ἂν φαίνοιτο πολλὰ περὶ τὰ νῦν λεγόμενα, εἰ πράξεται ἢ λέγεται. PLATO.

'The intellectual and moral differences between the sexes, seem to me to be entirely the result of *education*; using that word in its most extensive sense, to comprehend not merely the instruction received from teachers, but the habits of mind imposed by situation, or by the physical organisation of the animal frame.'

DUGALD STEWART.

'Asserting the rights which women in common with men ought to contend for, we have not attempted to extenuate their faults; but to prove them to be the natural consequence of their education and station in society.'

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT.

'Parmi les progrès de l'esprit humain les plus importans pour le bonheur général, nous devons compter l'entière destruction des préjugés, qui ont établi entre les deux sexes une inégalité de droits funeste à celui même qu'elle favorise. On chercheroit en vain des motifs de la justifier, par les différences de leur organisation physique, par celle qu'on voudroit trouver dans la force de leur intelligence, dans leur sensibilité morale. Cette inégalité n'a eu d'autre origine que l'abus de la force, et c'est vainement qu'on a essayé depuis, de l'excuser par des sophismes.'

CONDORCET.

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PREFACE.

In writing on a subject which the late Mrs. J. S. Mill has treated with a breadth of view, felicity of illustration, and closeness of reasoning, worthy of her great reputation, we have been obliged to touch much of the ground cultivated by her genius. Whenever we have done so, we have ventured to adopt her language; and though we are happy to feel that her influence has had much to do in strengthening our convictions, we are not aware that we have made any direct use of her labour without acknowledgment. As, however, we quote from Mrs. Mill at some length on two or three occasions; as these quotations do not give any adequate idea of the essay from which they are taken; and as every one, in common with Mr. Mill, must feel a pride in the reputation of this most distinguished woman, we take the liberty to subjoin, with some omissions, the paragraph with which Mr.

Mill prefaces the essay on the 'Enfranchisement of Women,' in the second volume of his 'Dissertations, &c.' Any one who has not mastered and made that essay his own, is without the advantage of some of the best materials out of which to form an opinion:—

'. . . . It is proper to state that she (Mrs. Mill) never regarded it (the essay) as a complete discussion of the subject which it treats of; and, highly as I estimate it, I would rather it remained unacknowledged, than that it should be read with the idea that even the faintest image can be found in it of a mind and heart which in their union of the rarest, and what are deemed the most conflicting excellences, were unparalleled in any human being that I have known or read of. . . . So elevated was the general level of her faculties, that the highest poetry, philosophy, oratory, or art, seemed trivial by the side of her, and equal only to expressing some part of her mind. And there is no one of those modes of manifestation in which she could not easily have taken the highest rank, had not her inclinations led her for the most part to content herself with being the inspirer, prompter, and unavowed coadjutor of others. . . . Had she

lived to write out all her thoughts on this great question, she would have produced something as far transcending in profundity the present essay, as, had she not placed a rigid restraint on her feelings, she would have excelled it in fervid eloquence. Yet nothing which even she could have written on any subject, would have given an adequate idea of the depth and compass of her mind. As during life she continually detected, before any one else had seemed to perceive them, those changes of times and circumstances which ten or twelve years later became subjects of general remark, so I venture to prophesy that if mankind continue to improve, their spiritual history for ages to come will be the progressive working out of her thoughts, and realisation of her conceptions.'

The subject of this inquiry is the *Political Dependence of Women;* but as some social considerations arise in the course of the argument, and in order to avoid the division of so short a treatise into chapters, we have adopted the larger title, the 'Social and Political Dependence of Women.'

THE

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DEPENDENCE

OF

WOMEN.

[The foot-notes, except those indicated by a figure, only give the authorities for the objections noticed in the following pages. The reader who relies on the accuracy of our statements, may altogether omit any reference to the unnumbered notes.]

THE SUBJECT of the Enfranchisement of Women usually excites laughter and ridicule. That women should have votes is so novel a proposal, and therefore, to untrained minds, so absurd, that few can refrain from indulging in what are meant to be jokes and witticisms.* Writers who have hitherto laboured in vain to produce the faintest smile upon the faces of their readers, now find no difficulty in producing a broad grin. Success brings inflation, until at last these scribblers regard themselves as compounds of wit and wisdom, and

* 'It is a terrible fancy—that of papa arguing his daughters out of the Yellow ranks into the Blue, or giving his wife a choice between independence and pin-money. As we have said, it is nearly impossible to treat this subject with much gravity.'—*Standard.*

'Families and household matters would be neglected during election time, and the husband and brother would be fortunate if they could obtain a hot dinner on those exciting occasions.'—*Observer.*

ascribe to their own cleverness what is in fact due to the prejudice and ignorance which they address. Others say, that though ridicule is a most effective weapon [redacted] generously lay it aside, partly in deference to [redacted] great men who have made the ridiculous tenet an article of their creed, and partly on account of the inherent strength of their objections and arguments.* They seem to be utterly unaware that ridicule never was and never will be demonstration. Ridicule is sometimes useful, but it is only in bringing to bear on those whom nobler feelings do not influence, the force which other people's opinions usually exercise. But, unfortunately, in this, its only use, it is as easily and as often wielded in a bad as in a good cause. Observe, then, either the ignorance or

* 'Though ridicule is not only a most effective but a perfectly fair weapon to employ when serious argument would be wholly thrown away, there are occasions on which its use is to be strongly deprecated. We take leave to say that the discussion as to the propriety of extending the electoral franchise to women is one of them. All the more because the laugh can be easily raised, should we guard ourselves against inopportune indulgence in extravagant humour.'—*Daily Telegraph.*

'There is yet another motive for treating the question with sobriety and candour rather than with invidious levity. The most conspicuous advocate of a female franchise in this country is one of its most illustrious and independent thinkers.'—*Daily Telegraph.*

'It is not very easy to speak with perfect gravity of a scheme which, perpetuating the disfranchisement of married ladies who are not separated from their husbands, and of young ladies who are not orphans, admits to the polling-booth a mixed multitude of widows and those whom, for want of a more respectful term, we must needs call old maids.'—*Times.*

disingenuousness of these writers. In the one case, what are we to think of those who have never discovered that in the various processes of induction and deduction, ridicule is entirely and absolutely useless; or in the other case, of those who pretend that in abandoning a worthless weapon which they know, like the ill-directed boomerang of the Indian, will recoil on themselves, they are influenced by the most high-minded motives? Others again, whose mathematical knowledge cannot embrace the sixth proposition of Euclid's first book, seem to think that ridicule and the principle *reductio ad absurdum* are synonymous.* If this were so, the Elements would indeed be one of the most satirical works extant; a proposition which even a writer who owes Mr. Mill a small, much less 'a deep debt of gratitude,' † would scarcely attempt to support.

But it is argued that the tendency to produce laughter is in itself a proof of fallacy.‡ In truth, however, the tendency is only a proof of novelty. Locke says that the sense of humour lies

* 'We have abstained from anything like banter or any available *reductio ad absurdum*.'—*Daily Telegraph.*

† *Daily Telegraph.*

‡ 'A novelty which is absolutely certain to be rejected is in itself little adapted to command popular respect; nor can grave politicians be expected to devote more than cursory attention to a scheme which, at least in the present generation, will raise no practical issue.'—*Saturday Review.*

wherever resemblance and incongruity produce an agreeable fancy. Addison says that wit must add surprise to delight, and that novelty is an essential part of it. Nothing is ludicrous in the idea of the enfranchisement of women—in their political equality—except its novelty; and if it provokes laughter and ridicule, it only incurs the same penalty as every new idea opposed to preconceived notions. New ideas radically different from existing opinions are generally treated as absurd, and often for no other reason than their newness.

A large number of the errors, and want of success, in physical inquiries among the Greeks, may be traced to this mental infirmity. Aristotle assumed that motion in a circle was the perfect kind of motion, and thence inferred that such was the motion of the heavenly bodies, since it would be absurd to suppose that they could have any other than the perfect motion. The doctrine of the four elements was proved in a somewhat similar way. The belief in antipodes was long rejected, because it assumed the absurdity that men could exist with their heads continually downwards. Copernicus, though supported by a bishop, a cardinal, and two of the most learned astronomers of the age, dared not give his discoveries to the world till eleven years after they were made. His opinions

meanwhile getting noised abroad, he was satirised on the stage at Elburg. The persecution which Galileo underwent in his old age, is one of the most melancholy events in the progress of learning. His doctrines were branded as heretical and absurd; and who so branded them? The inquisitors and others whose ignorance astonished him. Harvey's and Jenner's discoveries were met with ridicule and contempt. And, more recently, a writer in the 'Edinburgh Review' earned an unenviable notoriety, by ridiculing the notion that men would ever travel at the rate of forty or fifty miles an hour. In social matters, the fashion of waltzing was hailed as indecent and ridiculous; smoking as most absurd; and the fashions in dress and manners of preceding generations often appear ludicrous to the next, though custom may alone save their own fashions from appearing even more ridiculous. A century ago, opinions which are now considered axiomatic would have brought their disciples to a lunatic asylum. In fact, in religion, in philosophy, in everything which has engaged the attention of man, from the discovery of worlds to the invention of a new mode, the difficulty is not to find anything which has been received with ridicule and contempt, but to discover anything which has not.

We regret we cannot yet dismiss those much relied on weapons in the quiver of our opponents, ridicule and novelty. It is true that they have no real force, but they are so often used by those who pretend to, and who to some extent do, supply the public with opinions, that they must be met at some sacrifice to ourselves, and at the risk of boring the reader. The sole meaning, if it has any meaning, of such a sentence as the one which follows, is that the enfranchisement of women is undesirable because it is new, because it interferes with things as they are now arranged:—'Wherever Christianity has penetrated, there exists, as it were, a tacit concordat guaranteeing to the weaker sex the protection and deference of the stronger, upon one condition only; that condition is the political dependence of women, and it is a condition the breach of which might involve consequences far beyond our powers of prediction.'* Now such an argument which assumes the point at issue, and which threatens some awful or ridiculous consequences if the old system is abandoned and any innovation permitted, has been used in support of every injustice or absurdity which time, aided by selfishness, ignorance, or superstition, has fostered in the habits or political systems of past ages.

* 'Times.'

It was a superstitious, bigoted, persecuting belief in the infallible wisdom of current opinion, founded, so to say, more on established custom than on rational* conviction, which led to the death of Socrates, because he introduced new deities, and corrupted the youth; which led to the persecution of the Christians by Herod, by Nero, by Adrian, by Marcus Aurelius, and by many others, periodically, in different parts of the world, up to the time of Constantine the Great; which led to the bloody wars of the Crusades; to the massacres of Stockholm, St. Bartholomew, and of the Protestants during the Irish Rebellion in 1641; to the banishment of Cornelius Agrippa; to the burning of Huss and Jerome of Prague for heresy; to the burning of Savonarola for preaching against the crimes of the clergy; to the burning of Michael Servetus at Geneva; the persecution of Kepler, of Raleigh, of Selden, of Cranmer, and of Ridley. It was this same obedience to the influence of custom, to the authority of 'law and usage,' to which Mrs. Mill refers in these words:—'In the ancient world the same fact was alleged, with equal truth, in behalf of slavery. It might have been alleged in favour of the mitigated form of slavery, serfdom, all through the Middle Ages. It was urged against freedom of industry, freedom of

conscience, freedom of the press; none of these liberties were thought compatible with a well-ordered state, until they had proved their possibility by actually existing as facts.'

The 'novelty'[1] objection, then, is of no force; for it only repeats the old assertion, that whatever always has been, always must be.[2] It might, indeed, be urged that, unless our boasted civilisation and progress are but a vain conceit, the fact of a doctrine being approved by one age and aban-

[1] Plato said that there is no natural difference between the sexes, except in strength; and that they should both equally participate in the government of the state. The idea, then, can scarcely be called new, notwithstanding the constant protestations of certain writers:—

Κινδυνεύομεν γοῦν ἄκοντες ἀντιλογίας ἅπτεσθαι. Πῶς; Τὸ τὴν ἄλλην φύσιν ὅτι οὐ τῶν αὐτῶν δεῖ ἐπιτηδευμάτων τυγχάνειν πάνυ ἀνδρείως τε καὶ ἱριστικῶς κατὰ τὸ ὄνομα διώκομεν. . . .

Ἀλλ' ἔτι οἰησόμεθα δεῖν τὰ αὐτὰ ἐπιτηδεύειν τούς τε φύλακας ἡμῖν καὶ τὰς γυναῖκας αὐτῶν. . . .

Οὐδὲν ἄρα ἐστίν, ὦ φίλε, ἐπιτήδευμα τῶν πόλιν διοικούντων γυναικὸς διότι γυνή, οὐδ' ἀνδρὸς διότι ἀνήρ, ἀλλ' ὁμοίως διεσπαρμέναι αἱ φύσεις ἐν ἀμφοῖν τοῖν ζώοιν, καὶ πάντων μὲν μετέχει γυνὴ ἐπιτηδευμάτων κατὰ φύσιν, πάντων δὲ ἀνήρ, ἐπὶ πᾶσι δὲ ἀσθενέστερον γυνὴ ἀνδρός. . . .

Καὶ γυναικὸς ἄρα καὶ ἀνδρὸς ἡ αὐτὴ φύσις εἰς φυλακὴν πόλεως. . . .

Ἔστι δέ τι πόλει ἄμεινον ἢ γυναῖκάς τε καὶ ἄνδρας ὡς ἀρίστους ἐγγίγνεσθαι; Οὐκ ἔστιν.—*Plato.*

[2] 'There is not one single source of human happiness against which there have not been uttered the most lugubrious predictions,—turnpike roads, navigable canals, inoculation, hops, tobacco, the reformation, the revolution. There are always a set of worthy and moderately gifted men, who bawl out death and ruin upon every valuable change which the varying aspect of human affairs absolutely and imperiously requires. It would be extremely useful to make a collection of the hatred and abuse that all those changes have experienced, which are now admitted to be marked improvements in our condition. Such a history might make folly a little more modest and suspicious of its own decisions.'—*Sydney Smith.*

doned by another, affords a presumption of its fallacy. True, but its novelty merely makes investigation necessary. The objection, however, brings into view the reason why the custom is so firmly rooted. We think that Mrs. Mill's explanation [3] is conclusive:—'There is no difficulty in understanding why the subjection of women has been a custom. No other explanation is needed than physical force. That those who were physically weaker should have been made legally inferior, is quite conformable to the mode in which the world has been governed. Until very lately the rule of physical strength was the general law of human affairs. Throughout history, the nations, races, classes, which found themselves the strongest either in muscles, in riches, or in military discipline, have conquered and held in subjection the rest. If, even in the most improved nations, the law of the sword is at last discountenanced as unworthy, it is only since the calumniated eighteenth century. Wars of conquest have only ceased since democratic revolutions began. The world is very young, and has but just begun to cast off injustice. It is only now getting rid of negro slavery. It is only now getting rid of monar-

[3] 'Il n'est pas étonnant qu'en tout pays l'homme se soit rendu maitre de la femme, tout étant fondé sur la force.'—*Voltaire.*

chical despotism. It is only now getting rid of hereditary feudal nobility. It is only now getting rid of disabilities on the ground of religion. It is only beginning to treat any *men* as citizens, except the rich and a favoured portion of the middle class. Can we wonder that it has not yet done as much for women? As society was constituted until the last few generations, inequality was its very basis; association grounded on equal rights scarcely existed; to be equals was to be enemies; two persons could hardly co-operate in anything, or meet in any amicable relation, without the law's appointing that one of them should be the superior of the other. Mankind have outgrown this state, and all things now tend to substitute, as the general principle of human relations, a just equality, instead of the dominion of the strongest. But of all relations, that between men and women being the nearest and most intimate, and connected with the greatest number of strong emotions, was sure to be the last to throw off the old rule and receive the new; for in proportion to the strength of a feeling is the tenacity with which it clings to the forms and circumstances with which it has even accidentally become associated.'

So much, then, for the two objections which are on the threshold of the subject, or rather which

are always put there, in the teeth of experience and history, to bar any advance into the heart of the subject.* The real issues appear to be these: on the one hand it is asserted that political power is as much the inalienable right of woman as of man; that the enormous sexual inequalities, legal and social, under which she labours are entirely due to her exclusion; and that her enfranchisement, both as an act of justice and expediency, is imperatively necessary. On the other it is affirmed that the dependence of woman is founded in social laws which lie far deeper than any political laws; that this enfranchisement would be pernicious in the highest degree; that it would involve consequences far beyond the powers of prediction; that woman's instinct is against it; that man's use of a monopoly of political power has not pressed heavily or unjustly on the other sex; and that no feminine interests would be materially advanced by female enfranchisement.†

* 'The idea is barred by immemorial precedent and universal practice.'—*Standard.*

† 'There are social laws that lie far deeper than any political laws, and the first of these is the law which determines the relation of the sexes.'—*Times.*

'It is a condition (the political dependence of women) the breach of which might involve consequences far beyond our powers of prediction.'—*Times.*

'At the same time, they are not liberated slaves in need of protection from tyranny; nor, if they were, could they protect themselves by their vote.'—*Saturday Review.*

We beg to preface our examination of the several issues just stated, with a protest. Bentham says, 'If a man who calls for the right of suffrage to be given to any one human being, calls for its being refused to any other human being, it lies upon him to give a particular reason for such refusal.' Of course, if this proposition is sound, we need, in order to completely establish the claims of woman to the franchise, only refute the various objections which are urged against her admission. There is no need to show why she should have a vote; it is sufficient to answer objections. The truth, too, of Bentham's aphorism will probably be admitted. That it is so practically, recent reform debates

'Our objections are—firstly, that the vote is not necessary to her, and, secondly, that she does not want it.'—*Standard.*

'The hardship, if any exists, is confined to women under very special, and we trust temporary, circumstances.'—*Observer.*

'Allowing that men exercise the power, have they in general made an unmanly and selfish use of it? Here, again, women, if consulted, would answer, No.'—*Standard.*

'We are not aware, moreover, that any considerable number of women desire to possess the right which Mr. Mill is so anxious that they should have.'—*Observer.*

'Of course, if feminine interests are neglected by male legislators, or if the work of government would be materially advanced by the personal aid of ratepaying widows and spinsters, the fact of their inability to discharge other duties of male citizens would not be conclusive against their enfranchisement. The former proposition, however, needs much stronger evidence for its support than has yet been produced, while the latter is supported by no evidence whatever.'—*Times.*

'It is the glory of Christianity, and the crowning triumph of Christian civilisation, to have created and consecrated moral safeguards against the abuse of this superiority.—*Times.*

prove. Every speaker (Mr. Lowe perhaps excepted), when arguing for the entire or partial exclusion of any class, feels bound to give reasons. Some talk of ignorance and drunkenness; others express confidence in the process of 'natural selection;' others grow eloquent over the magical virtue of 'a balance of classes;' but all concur in giving reasons, good, bad, or indifferent, to justify the exclusion. No one says, 'the fact that A is a human being gives him no claim to political representation, even though no reason can be shown for his exclusion;' yet on this ground alone can Bentham's dictum be disputed. Whether the franchise be considered 'a right' or 'a privilege,' is immaterial; such discussions usually degenerate into mere verbal disputes. Cause must be shown why a privilege is bestowed on one human being and withheld from another, just as reasons must be brought to prove why a right should be denied to one human being and granted to another. The advocates, therefore, of female enfranchisement have no edifice of their own to erect; they have only to demolish the building of their opponents.

Waiving, however, the advantage which Bentham's dictum would seem to give, we shall consider the question independently. In the course of the inquiry, objections will necessarily arise and be considered; but we shall postpone until

the end a brief examination of what we consider the chief objections.

Men and women are equally concerned in the good government of the country. In all legislation which relates to the repression of physical violence, women are even the more deeply concerned, because of their inferior bodily strength;[4] in all other legis-

[4] Every one admits the physical inferiority of the female sex, notwithstanding that in Arabia, where most of the outdoor work is performed by women, they are stouter and larger limbed than the men. But physical is no proof of intellectual inferiority. Analogy points the other way. The extinct races of gigantic animals were of a lower organisation than any races now existing. Of existing races, the strongest have not usually the most intelligence, and the females, though generally smaller than the males, are not less intelligent. Man, indeed, for his weight is physically one of the weakest animals; and we believe that the majority of great men, poets, statesmen, philosophers, and even warriors, have been physically weak men. The period, too, at which athletic exercises are most pursued and enjoyed, is not when the intellectual powers are at their zenith. The intellect continues to increase after the physical system has begun to decay. Since, also, exercise gives strength, and the full exercise of mind and body can scarcely be carried on simultaneously, the cultivation of the former may be insured at the expense, if not necessarily of health, certainly of full bodily vigour. Again, it is sometimes argued that *ceteris paribus*, mental power varies with the size of the brain, and that since the female cranium is smaller than the male's, woman must have less capacity than man. But this doctrine, in the only sense in which it can obtain much acceptance, tells in woman's favour. The size of the brain in proportion to the body, not the absolute size of the brain, is alone any evidence of capacity. The elephant's brain is larger than man's, but it is smaller in proportion to size and weight of body; and, in comparison to woman's, it is yet smaller. Such considerations, however, whichever way they point, possess very little value. But we notice them because the mind is apt to be led by its desire for uniformity; and because we have met with many passages in popular books about and for women, such as the following, which we extract from the 'Daughters of England,' by Mrs. Ellis:—'As women, then, the first thing of importance is to be content to

lation equally concerned. Since, then, women have at least the same right to happiness, so far as just and impartial laws can secure it, as men, and since their number not only equals but is supposed to be even greater than that of men, the sole ground on which the one sex, with any plea of justification, could assume the exclusive government of the state, would be that of advantage to the other. But this plea is only that universal apology for the assumption of authority—the benefit of those who are to be enslaved—which has so deeply stained the pages of history. Combined with avarice, it is the foundation of the most debasing and brutal of all institutions, slavery. *À priori*, then, it should be regarded with extreme suspicion.

be inferior to men—inferior in mental power, in the same proportion that you are inferior in bodily strength.' There is yet another popular method of proving woman's intellectual inferiority—comparing the long list of great women with the even longer list of great men. But, notwithstanding women have accomplished so much in the teeth of incessant persecution, and notwithstanding thousands of almost equally great names could be adduced from both sexes, any argument drawn from the comparison would be utterly worthless, because women, always the victims of physical force, have been persistently shut out from men's opportunities. A fine, so to say, has been levied on them. They have had to pay the heaviest social penalties, and not only the ordinary difficulties, but special difficulties created by strong men, and which meet only women, they have had to surmount. Depend on it, centuries hence, our oppressive treatment of women will not more amaze posterity than we are amazed at the custom of the Babylonians to make every native woman sit in the temple of Venus, and have intercourse with a stranger; or at the practice of Lycurgus, Socrates, Cato, and other great Greeks and Romans, to lend their wives to their friends.

The only grounds which could be urged to justify it are:—

1. That past experience and the present condition of women show such an assumption of power to be beneficial to them.

2. That the superiority in intellect gives men the right of arbitrary sway.

3. That superiority in morality gives men the right of arbitrary sway.

If the first proposition be false, mere superiority in intellect or in morality constitutes no sound claim to exclusive power. But even the demonstration of all the three propositions to the complete satisfaction of every man, is no sufficient warranty so long as it is not granted by woman herself. As to the unanimity of women, though perhaps the majority of the sex are indifferent, and a considerable number hostile, yet some of the most distinguished women, supported by thousands of their less eminent sisters, demand enfranchisement; while many distinguished men, among whom is the most profound political and philosophical thinker living, support the claim with steadfast earnestness. Though, therefore, a proof of all three propositions, however satisfactory to men's minds, would not destroy the justice of woman's claim, her claim is, in fact, still

stronger; for each proposition is utterly untenable.

Let us examine them *seriatim*.

1. The entire history of woman is one of slavery and oppression. Among the Hebrews, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, &c., she was treated little better than we treat our horses and dogs. She was confined and secluded, and polygamy reigned supreme. Monarchs vied in the magnificence of their seraglios, and ancient history is full of heroes and of kings whose future has been marred and wisdom corrupted by indulgence in the grossest sensuality. The Egyptians were the most just in their conduct towards woman. They neither degraded her by polygamy, nor kept her in confinement. She might succeed to property, or even to the throne, in default of male issue. Among the early Greeks, who received a great deal of their civilisation from the East, particularly from the Egyptians, her condition was in some respects improved. Nevertheless, she was not admitted into general society, nor allowed to appear much in public, and she lived entirely secluded in apartments at the back or upper part of the house.

The truth is that both the Greeks and Romans treated woman as a creature with very little more

intelligence than a dog. They made her perform all the domestic offices; even so far as conducting the men to bed, undressing them, and drying and perfuming them after the bath. The law, too, treated her practically as a slave; for without the consent of her perpetual guardian, she could neither make a will, discharge any public function, nor manage her own property. The Romans, however, gradually gave her greater freedom, and at length a share in religious solemnities. But throughout all the various phases of rigorous austerity and unbounded licentiousness which mark Roman history, she was constantly treated as an inferior being, designed only to minister to man's pleasure.

The manners and customs of the East have remained stationary for many centuries. In Asia and in Turkey the horrors of polygamy still continue; but in all Europe, except Mahometan Turkey, Christianity has been instrumental in effecting a gradual change, which though differing in many particulars, has been of a similar character all over the continent. Sufficient however for our present purpose, which is to show how man, especially in this country, has wielded his power over woman, will be a few facts concerning her status in Britain from the earliest times.

Very little is known of her condition among the earliest inhabitants.[5] She was probably a slave, the usual fate of the weak among savage tribes. There is, however, evidence for believing that she was not always treated without some consideration, and the names of two queens, Cartisamunda and Boadicea, have come down to us. During the administration and after the departure of the Romans, her condition was wretched. But among the Anglo-Saxons her position was considerably raised, though she seems to have had less independence among the chiefs and landowners than among the agricultural class. For while, in case of separation, the wives of the last divided equally with the husband the goods and chattels which they had jointly possessed, the wives of the first, received only the smaller share. Both married and single women had the power to possess, to inherit, and to will away money or lands. They could bring actions, and their persons and property were protected by special enactments. Still the fragmentary records of those times prove that woman was often the victim of oppression and outrage. The introduction of Christianity, about

[5] Their marriage customs seem to have been peculiar:—'*Uxores habent deni duodenique inter se communes, et maxime fratres cum fratribus, parentesque cum liberis; sed qui sunt ex his nati, eorum habentur liberi, quo primum virgo quæque deducta est.*'—*Cæsar.*

the year 600, was very powerful in ameliorating her condition. Concubinage, hitherto permitted, was forbidden, and a religion which taught equality for man and woman in the next world would obviously foster equality in this. Convents and monasteries quickly sprung up, and kept alight some glimmering of knowledge. King Alfred, who, according to tradition, imbibed his love of learning and of literature from Queen Judith, dispelled the almost universal darkness. Under his wise and benignant sway civilisation moved onward. The Saxon ladies seem to have been both eager in studious pursuits and industrious in manual employments. Of woman's position among the lower orders, scarcely anything is known. But the Norman conquest was, on the whole, favourable to her, although the law made the husband, to the fullest extent, the master, even to the extent of allowing him to inflict bodily chastisement.

The Crusades had considerable influence on the condition of woman, but it was an influence which, while it affected both sexes, did not disturb the relation between them. Chivalry, too, had a deep and beneficial influence. The benefit was not so much in enlarging her privileges as in making men view her in a new light. From the

days of the lust-eaten and splenetic Solomon to the dawn of chivalry, writers had poured forth their abuse and contempt on her. Nothing was too bad. Without civil rights, with few occupations, and despised and ill-treated by men, her condition was truly miserable. But with chivalry arose new ideas concerning woman. Those who before had sung of heroes and of kings, and had mentioned woman only to traduce her, now sung of beauty and of love. Hyperbolical and extravagant praise took the place of jeering and contempt. She, who had before been looked upon as a mere instrument to man's pleasures, was now set above mortality. The same spirit which induced Petrarch to compare his mistress to Jesus Christ was abroad. The ambition of the knight was to die in her defence, and the ambition of the poet to immortalise her in his verse. Of course practice did not accord with such preposterous precept, but assuredly chivalry had great influence in raising the status of woman, notwithstanding it was the theory of her imbecility applied to the fullest extent. Then, as now, she was considered utterly helpless in all affairs of the state, and even to take care of her own interests; then, as now, her occupations were those which men disdain; and then, as now, she was con-

pensated for her helplessness by adulation, and a sort of sentimental idolism.

The next event which had any considerable influence on woman's position was the Reformation. The energies of the nation, which had to some extent lain dormant, were aroused, and the blow which was struck at authority made easier any departure from custom or manners. The gradual rise of the middle class, the progress of arts and sciences which gradually superseded household manufactures, the Wars of the Roses, the Revolution, and other events which stand in history, also necessarily influenced her condition; and while her character, employment, and condition have varied with the changing times; while she was ignorant with the Stuarts, learned in the Elizabethan age; at one period licentious, at another puritanical; she has been continually taking steps towards lessening the gross injustice under which she labours, though many of her present wrongs appear to be of modern growth, and though she has always been the victim of physical force. In short, in the words of Lord Macaulay, 'If there be a word of truth in history, women have always been and still are, over the greater part of the globe, humble companions, playthings, captives, menials, beasts of burden. Except in a few happy

and highly civilised communities, they are strictly in a state of personal slavery. Even in those countries where they are best treated, the laws are generally unfavourable to them, with respect to almost all the points in which they are the most deeply interested.'

Dismissing her past history, which is useful in showing that man has at all events been consistent in his oppression, we come to consider what are her present grievances, legal and social. We speak of *social* as well as legal inequalities, because it is clear that those who possess absolute power in making the laws, who have arrogated to themselves all government, all religious offices, all professions, and all wealth, will obtain a paramount influence in shaping the social institutions of the country.

The law does not recognise rape by a husband upon his wife; that is to say, he may always constrain her to his desire by physical force.

All the personal property which belongs to a woman before marriage, or which accrues after marriage, becomes vested in the husband. Of her real property, though the husband cannot dispose of it or will it away, he receives the profits during her life, irrespective of her wishes.

In business a married woman has no authority.

She can neither buy nor sell; for she has neither goods nor money; nor can she make a contract without her husband's consent, except for necessaries. A promissory note, or bill of exchange, drawn, or endorsed, or accepted by her, is void. True, that these deprivations are sometimes said to be made in order to relieve her of care and responsibility. But surely they who advance this plea forget that the chief use or object of laws, is to prevent the strong and tyrannical from domineering over the weak. If man were so perfect that nothing could induce him to commit robbery, whether theft were punished by a day's imprisonment, or death, or a seat in the House of Lords, would be immaterial. So if all men and all women were kind and just, if all husbands and wives loved one another, and each cared for the other's happiness as much as his own, or more, all power might be safely invested in either the one or the other: though even in the rare case where this identity of interest and affection were complete the present law is bad; for, in the first place, the power of the one and the subservience of the other are calculated to destroy the good qualities on which the identity is founded; and, in the second, the state of the law will surely foster the opinion that business is the duty of the man alone, and is unbecoming in the woman. Hence

it happens that when the talents of the woman (no uncommon circumstance) are superior to the man's, they remain fallow, and the incapacity of the man brings ruin alike to husband, wife, and children.

The picture of Utopia, however, in which the woman's deprivations are represented as tender mercies, is utterly unlike the terrible reality. Our method of protecting 'defenceless woman,' of guarding the being whom we say is weak in body and in mind, is to place her almost as completely at man's mercy as the slave at his master's. If a father dies intestate, the eldest son inherits the real estate to the exclusion of the daughters. Opinion follows the law—the opinion of man—and fathers rarely divide their property equally among sons and daughters.

But shameful as are these legal injustices, custom is quite as unjust.

The universities and professions are irrevocably closed to woman; and the single aim of her education appears to be to make her pleasing and agreeable to man. From numerous trades and employments she is virtually shut out, sometimes through the prejudice of employers, and sometimes through the combinations of trades' unions.[6] Hence pecu-

[6] We do not mean any attack on trades' unions. They are composed of men who, if not so completely as women, have still been

niary distress is more common to women, in every rank, than to men.

Our notions of chastity could not possibly be more disgraceful. In this civilised and Christian land, the vice which is visited with the direst punishment in the one sex, is practically treated as venial in the other. The crime, however, of illicit intercourse is precisely equal in the man and in the woman. It is a sin equally shared, whether considered as an offence against morality or the interests of society. Volumes have been written on the evils of prostitution, but it appears to be generally forgotten that if one sex is more chaste than the other, prostitution is a necessity, and its extent will vary as the amount of that excess. In a country where want is unknown, prostitution, in the sense of letting out the body for hire, should be unknown, or at least almost confined to the rich man's mistress. But in the sense of a woman having intercourse with several men, the result seems, at all events in the present state of society, inevitable. What, then, do we do in Eng-

excluded from any power in making the laws, and they are necessary in self-defence. No doubt they have no special dispensation, enabling them to avoid mistakes; but, on the whole, their effect has been most beneficial. Already they have raised the rate of wages and shortened the hours of labour, and we wish them all success in a further reform in this direction.

land? Do we encourage it or discountenance it, not in words, but in act and in law? These are indisputably the facts: we begin by confining the education and knowledge of woman, and then, by keeping from her all resources within herself, either to derive amusement or independence, make her accessible to the arts of the seducer; we next contract the sphere of her employment, rendering it difficult for her to get an honest living; we next expel from all association, and almost from all hope of reformation, the woman who has once fallen, while her seducer goes unpunished, legally and socially; and we end by founding a few inadequate institutions to eradicate the sin which we have done all we can to encourage in its basest and most degrading form.[7] Of course clerks will sometimes rob their employers, and tradesmen their customers; but the existence of a class who live by stealing, and practise robbery as a profession, is chiefly due to bad legislation. And so it is with prostitution. Wives will sometimes be unfaithful to their husbands, husbands to their wives, and unlawful commerce will take place between the

[7] The Hindoos punished the crime of adultery with the most awful severity, even to burning the offender alive, but the punishment varied with the caste of the transgressor; and the Brahmins, *who made the law*, got off with the loss of their hair. This is exactly our method. We, who make the laws, must not suffer by them.

sexes; but the regular prostitution of the body is owing to the iniquitous social and legal enactments under which we live. Hitherto men have always made the laws, and wherever these laws affect women—women who have never been represented —they are grossly unjust. Unless the present vicious, unquiet, and demoralising state of society is a necessity, the remedy, we submit, obvious, radical, and complete, is the enfranchisement of women.

Nothing more clearly shows the unjust state of things than the law regarding seduction. A man under the promise of marriage seduces a woman. Her ruin and the birth of a child are the consequences. What social penalties fall upon the seducer? None. His friends, those to whom the destiny of more than half of the species is entrusted, continue to receive him, and the scoundrel has been even known to *boast* of his success without a protest from lips or from a horsewhip! Society's doors remain open to him, and matrons and their daughters still receive him with nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles. What are the legal penalties? For the maintenance of his child he may be compelled to pay half a crown a week for thirteen years; the law here, as often happens, favouring the rich man. For the seduction, the girl herself has no remedy, but she may bring an

action for breach of promise, and her father or nearest relative may obtain damages for the loss of her services. And this is all. Yet nothing is more certain than that this is a case of false pretences. If a man, hungry and starving, obtains half a crown under false pretences, he is liable to five years' penal servitude; but for the dastardly act of robbing a girl under false pretences of what society tells her she ought to value more than life, no punishment is awarded.

So far, then, as a just use of arbitrary power gives a claim to its possession man's pretensions are flimsy indeed.

2. And what is the argument of superior intellect worth? Granting for a moment that woman is inferior; what then? One of the fundamental maxims of representative government is that a person may be perfectly competent to *choose* a representative, though utterly unfitted to *be* a representative. The mental difference between him who is competent to legislate and him who is fit to choose a representative may be enormous; but surely the most arrogant assumption would not assert that this gigantic intellectual disparity exists between the sexes. But unless it does exist, the superiority argument—which superiority we totally deny[8]—

[8] 'An excellent passage,' (we quote Mrs. Mill) 'on this part of the

is absolutely and literally worthless. Half the oppression under which nations have groaned has been sought to be justified by the plea of superior intellect. That plea is the foundation of despotism, of slavery, and of all tyranny, by a strong over a weak race. Moreover, are its advocates willing to push the doctrine to its legitimate conclusion, the perpetual sway of intellect? Are they ready and willing to submit to the yoke of their intellectual superiors? If they are not, there will be no difference of opinion as to either their consistency, intelligence, or honesty.

But what proof have we of woman's inferiority? The *ipsi diximus* of men. They say that she is inferior. They take all power into their own hands;

subject, from one of Sydney Smith's contributions to the Edinburgh Review, we will not refrain from quoting:—"A great deal has been said of the original difference of capacity between men and women, as if women were more quick and men more judicious—as if women were more remarkable for delicacy of association, and men for stronger powers of attention. All this, we confess, appears to us very fanciful. That there is a difference in the understandings of the men and the women we every day meet with, everybody, we suppose, must perceive; but there is none surely which may not be accounted for by the difference of circumstances in which they have been placed, without reference to any conjectural difference of original conformation of mind. As long as boys and girls run about in the dirt, and trundle hoops together, they are both precisely alike. If you catch up one half of these creatures, and train them to a particular set of actions and opinions, and the other half to a perfectly opposite set, of course their understandings will differ, as one or the other sort of occupation has called this or that talent into action. There is surely no occasion to go into any deeper or more abstruse reasoning, in order to explain so very simple a phenomenon."'

they train her from infancy to believe in her inferiority; they narrow the range of her studies; and then, forsooth, when they have done everything to produce that inferiority which they start by assuming, they coolly and arrogantly assert that all is done for her own good. Having made her entirely dependent for her daily bread; having taught her to think it her highest aim to be united to one of the 'lords of the creation;' having educated her to minister to their wants, to gratify their passions, to add to their comforts; in short, to live to pander to their selfishness, they crown all by telling their deluded victim that she has a weak mind, and that her 'sphere'[9] is submission to and attendance on man. It is time to throw aside these flimsy sophisms. If ever a bad passion under the profession of virtue and mercy sought to gratify itself, it is this lust for power. In the long list of human vices and crimes there is none which has

[9] 'When a prejudice, which has any hold on the feelings, finds itself reduced to the unpleasant necessity of assigning reasons, it thinks it has done enough when it has re-asserted the very point in dispute, in phrases which appeal to the pre-existing feeling. Thus, many persons think they have justified the restrictions on women's field of action, when they have said that the pursuits from which women are excluded are *unfeminine* and that the *proper sphere* of women is not politics or publicity, but private and domestic life. We deny the right of any portion of the species to decide for another portion, or any individual for another individual, what is and what is not their "proper sphere." The proper sphere for all human beings is the largest and highest which they are able to attain to. What this is cannot be ascertained without complete liberty of choice.'—*Mrs. Mill.*

caused so much misery. Every age has its faults; and deeds which the best and wisest have done in past ages would be shunned now by the bad. But there are few things more odious, more calculated to promote the worst vices of man and woman, more sure to breed selfishness in the one and subserviency in the other, than the political dependence of woman. Let her reflect what this dependence means. It means that her position, as a sex, is at the absolute will and disposal of another. Everything concerning her education, her subsistence, her employment, her religion, all are his. Body and soul, she is at his mercy. He may lend her to his friends as they did in Sparta. He may degrade her to the harem as they do in Turkey. In a word, there is nothing between her and slavery but man's will. True, he finds, as in the treatment of the 'other inferior animals,' that kindness brings more comfort and satisfaction to himself than harshness. But this fact, which does not lessen her defencelessness, is of very slight and partial influence. No one can look round the world and see vice rampant on every side, happy marriages the exception, the brutal treatment of woman divulged in our police and divorce courts, social and legal inequalities pressing her on every side, artificial difficulties thrown up between her and

her bread, prostitution stalking abroad without shame—no one can see these things without believing that men have tyrannically used the power which they have tyrannically seized. Talk of Utopian philosophy! Why, the idea that men now are, and always have been, so good, so just, nay, so perfect that the destinies of one half of the human race may be entrusted to their charge, flies more in the face of experience, and relies more on the virtue of erring humanity, than the most sanguine scheme the most sanguine philosopher has ever propounded.[10]

Where wealth abounds, the present system produces narrow and little-minded women, who, satiated with every bodily luxury, intolerant to their sex, and sycophants to their husbands, go through life in self-satisfied godliness and content. Where there is poverty we have the governess seeking a wretched livelihood amid contumely and contempt; the seamstress working at her coffin and her grave; the betrayed girl abandoned both by her seducer and humanity; and the prostitute seeing man in all his glory.

[10] The frequent assertion that sexual influence is sufficient to secure the just treatment of women, we have shown to be contrary to all experience. Indeed, in treating women as a class, this influence has been very slight—almost nothing. And if history proves it to be totally unable to cope with self-interest and love of power, the enfranchisement of women seems to follow.

But assume that men are the noble, disinterested, magnanimous beings they are represented; suppose that the world is a poetical creation, like the Swerga or the Domdaniel cavern, and that wars have died out, armies are disbanded, and righteousness and peace have kissed each other; what then? Still the political dependence of women would be neither just nor expedient. In the words of Mrs. Mill, 'the miserable expediences which are advanced as excuses for so grossly partial a dispensation would not be sufficient, even if they were real, to render it other than a flagrant injustice. While, far from being expedient, we are firmly convinced that the division of mankind into two castes, one born to rule over the other, is in this case, as in all cases, an unqualified mischief; a source of perversion and demoralisation, both to the favoured class and to those at whose expense they are favoured; producing none of the good which it is the custom to ascribe to it, and forming a bar, almost insuperable while it lasts, to any really vital improvement, either in the character or in the social condition of the human race.' And we may add, that man's treatment of woman, individually, might be everything to be desired, and yet be utterly unjust in legislation; and such must also be the admission of those who believe in her happy social condition, but

who see, they confess, so much to regret in her legal inequalities.[11] The truth is, that if she is capable of managing her own affairs; in other words, is fit to assume the duties and offices of a responsible being; inferiority of intellect would be an additional reason for giving her representation; for the more inferior she is, the more she requires just laws to protect her.

3. Does superior morality give man a right to supreme power? Even if the superiority were a fact instead of an assumption, which perhaps the woman has the greater claim to, it would be no justification whatever. It would only be some guarantee that the power would not be used without any conscience. Hitherto we have had neither the guarantee nor the conscience, and we believe that an infusion of a higher morality into the legislature, far more than a higher intellect, is that which is wanting. To trace every injustice or imperfection in the laws to selfishness would be to ignore alike history and human nature. But nothing is more true than that past legislation has been, and the present legislation is, more impeded by selfishness than by any other

[11] 'Trop de puissance déprave la bonté, altère toutes les jouissances de la délicatesse; les vertus et les sentimens ne peuvent résister d'une part à l'exercice du pouvoir, de l'autre à l'habitude de la crainte.'—*Madame de Staël.*

one thing. We mean by selfishness the different modifications of self-interest, and the passions commonly classed as selfish. When we mark the marvellous success which has attended man's speculations on the material universe, how beautifully he has used the knowledge he has gradually built up in satisfying his wants, and how intricate and refined are the processes by which he has achieved so much, we are filled with wonder and admiration. But if we turn our gaze into the field of social phenomena, how different is the view! There we see opinion conflicting opinion, the strong tyrannising over the weak, vice rampant and shameless, toil and ignorance and privation the lot of the vast majority of the human race, and more than one half of humanity in forced subordination to the other half; yet the system under which these things exist is lauded as the noblest development of which mankind is capable. Broadly and advisedly we say, intending to enter into particulars directly, that the miserable failure is less owing to inherent difficulties than to intense selfishness. It is the selfishness and immorality of the ruling classes which create half the problems it is the business of the legislature to solve, or rather to apply the solution.

Take the English House of Commons. Though

that house is not the place for philosophical discoveries, it always contains many men of the highest administrative and practical ability. But social philosophy is immeasurably in advance of its practical application; and the reason is the low moral tone of the great mass of members of parliament.[12] A man who, blinded by his interests or his passions, does what is wrong, believing it to be right, com-

[12] Mr. Bright, in his last speech at Birmingham, expresses an opinion which is common to every one who knows anything of the House of Commons. The only fault to be found with it, is that it does not do full justice to the selfishness, sordidness, and corruption which taint an assembly containing so many noble-hearted and large-minded men. Mr. Bright says: 'This House of Commons, I will undertake to say, is by far the most corrupt that has been elected and assembled since the Reform Bill. I am not able to say what it has cost to seat these 650 members in that house, but if I said it had cost them and their friends a million of money I should be a long way under the mark. I believe it has cost more to seat those 650 men there than it has cost to seat all the members of all the other representative and legislative assemblies in the world that are now in existence in the different countries of the globe. And, without a man's intending to be corrupt, this state of things makes him inevitably corrupt.' And again: 'There are many members who pay always from 1,000*l.* to 15,000*l.* for their election; and although there are men in the House of Commons who are too honest, I believe, to be swayed by that consideration, still there are great numbers, I am satisfied, who are willing to take almost any kind of measure on any subject from any government, rather than go back to their constituents with the chance, first of all, of not coming back to the house at all, and with the certainty that if they stand a contest they must lessen the balance at their bankers by several thousand pounds; and so they were willing to tolerate a Tory government and Tory Reform Bill, to break up the Liberal party, to do anything whatever, as they say, to settle the question in the House of Commons' style and fashion in this parliament and during the present session, and not as the great body of the people wish it to be settled; and they are ready to bear all this rather than have a dissolution of parliament.'

mits a moral, not an intellectual, error. This self-blinding runs through all the relations of life, and the legislator does not escape its influence. Strong and weak minds are alike affected by it; the first blind themselves with clever, the last with shallow, sophisms. He, then, who knowingly sacrifices the interests of the community to what he believes to be his own interests, and who, through laziness, or passion, or want of study, holds wrong convictions, equally commits a moral error. And all these errors may be justly urged against the House of Commons.

We speak of the rank and file, without whose consent the few great and illustrious men are powerless. Without learning,[13] without special training, without deep convictions, without any superior ability for politics or anything else, without, in fact, any recommendation, but an ancient name, or a large *Nisi Prius* practice, or a large business inherited from a shrewd father, they enter parliament, double their subscriptions to local charities, send presents of game to their chief supporters, and

[13] There are 202 university men in the House of Commons, and of these only forty-five are honour men. To say that those who have taken honours are necessarily better educated than those who have not been to a university, would be preposterous; but, as a general rule, if a man takes his ordinary degree, but does not pass in honours, it is a sign of intellectual laziness or intellectual incapacity. We take the figures from the recent 'Essays on Reform.'

settle down into very contented, very respectable, very ordinary members of parliament, generally voting with their party, never absent from an important division, except when a dissolution threatens, and ready to make any sacrifice—even to risking a revolution—in order to be off to their shooting in September. When will the public come to see, that to assume the functions of a legislator from personal motives, or without special qualifications, is to commit an abominable crime?

These views concerning the real impediments to good government are borne out by the actual legislation of the last fifty years.

The opposition to the Catholic Reform Bill cannot have arisen from pure intellectual blindness. The denial of the rights of private judgment in matters of religion, is only one of the many forms in which bigoted intolerance has gratified itself, and the passing of the Relief Bill was due more to the higher moral standard which the nation, or at least a portion of it, had reached than to the discovery of powerful arguments of which preceding generations had not the benefit.

The absurdities and anomalies of the representative system had been recognised long before the Reform Bill of 1832. A petition was presented in 1793 by a society associated for the purpose of

obtaining parliamentary reform, in which the inequalities that then existed, and continued to exist until 1832, were most ably pointed out.[14] But the House of Commons neither opposed it at the beginning of the agitation through any intellectual blindness, nor in the end yielded it through any superior enlightenment. Selfishness made them oppose it; fear forced them to pass it.

The abolition of slavery throughout the British dominions cannot be too highly praised. But will any one assert that the same kind of influence produced it and the belief in the Principia?

To discover that the bulk of the women employed in factories were in a dreadful state of vice and degradation, and that to take a child of six years and compel it to work for fourteen or fifteen hours a day among depraved men and women, would lead to its moral and physical ruin, was scarcely an intellectual feat. The facts were notorious; and to trace their consequences would surely not require any very abstruse process of reasoning. Yet the wonderful discovery was not made until 1833, when the labour of children was limited to nine hours a day. In 1844, fresh inquiries were instituted, which led to an Act

[14] A copy of the petition is given in the appendix to 'Molesworth's History of the Reform Bill.'

limiting the employment of women (applicable only to weaving manufactories and one or two others) to twelve hours a day. Seven years more were required to prove that the act might be judiciously extended. In 1851 the hours were reduced to ten, and the application of the Act still further widened. Yet another nine years, and by the Acts of 1860 and 1861 the measure was again made more extensive. How long it will take to discover that the measure admits of still wider application, is a problem which we should despair of seeing solved if it still depended upon the action of parliament, and not upon the gentle pressure of the people. But it is even more difficult to tell how much longer our boasting and boasted Christian statesmen and legislators—'the saviours of the nation not yet saved!'—who, feeding on the fat of the land, yet fighting for its loaves and fishes—growing eloquent in the praise of the working man, yet refusing all trust in him—drinking, gambling, travelling, enjoying *ad nauseam*—yet blind to the wretchedness around them, will declare and insist that our institutions are perfect, our greatness pre-eminent, and our parliament a faithful reflex of the feelings, opinions, and wants of a prosperous and happy people.

The repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 was only

embodying in practical legislation what Adam Smith clearly demonstrated in 1776. It may be said that the overthrow of protection was a triumph of intellect. No doubt. But the discovery of the true theory was not made in the House of Commons. All that the House did was gradually and unwillingly to adopt it in the course of about ninety years. This delay is the more inexcusable, the more degrading, the more selfish, because the difficulty, after discoveries are made, is not to follow the reasoning by which they are demonstrated, but to fail to follow it.

If legislators had taken the same pains to master the principles of legislation as lawyers do those of law, and physicians those of medicine, it is impossible to conceive how much more rapid the progress of the country, material and intellectual, would have been. But it is certain that if the House of Commons did not comprehend the truth of Adam Smith's doctrine for ninety years, it was solely through a moral blindness.

The disclosures of which Mr. Hardy's Act is the result, we owe to the press. That the Act does not go farther, we owe to the prejudice—we should say, to the immorality of parliament. The system of gang labour in the eastern counties has been going on for about fifty years, though now it may be said

to be doomed. The press and the people, not the House of Commons, have said it. Again, to solve the problems with which we now have to deal—as, for instance, reform, education, land tenure in Ireland, the Irish Church—are we waiting for a Bacon or a Bentham to enlighten us? Rather, have we not plenty of brains both inside and outside the legislature? Is it not the fact, that what we lack is a higher moral tone in our representatives?

It is sometimes argued that progress to be sure must be slow. But slowness cannot, *per se*, be good. Slowness which arises from the careful examination of both sides of a question, and which is patient in the collection of data, is not only commendable, but essential. But the slowness which proceeds from ignorance, or selfishness, or mental inactivity—and this is the only slowness which requires ninety years to apply an obvious truth —is pernicious and immoral.

The political dependence of woman, then, cannot be justified on any one of the three only plausible grounds—a superior morality, a superior intelligence, or a proper use of exclusive power in the past, in its influences on both men and women.

But if we have proved so much, we have proved much more. If we have shown a lax morality to

pervade the House of Commons, we have furnished an irrefutable reason for the enfranchisement of woman.

In the first place, she has no security whatever that her interests will not be ignored—in fact, they are ignored. That she is sufficiently represented or protected by her husband, her father, or her brothers, all history refutes; and Lord Brougham did not exaggerate when he said that 'there must be a total reconstruction of the law before women can have justice.' In the second place, if a low morality is the great bane of our legislature, then infusion of new blood, so to say, might be beneficial. The last consideration, though comparatively of little weight, should be conclusive with those who insist that the mission of woman is to raise, to elevate, to exalt man, to breathe into him a purer morality, and to counteract or destroy evil influences.

The demand that woman should be directly represented, that she should be permitted to look after her own interests, does not necessarily imply that no dependence is to be placed in the honesty of man. It merely means that every one has special interests of his own to look after; interests which no one understands so well as himself, and which sometimes are so various and important

that he has literally no time to examine, much less to advocate or agitate, even if he has the inclination, the interests of other people. This multitude of interests is especially observable in the House of Commons. There we have complaints, both loud and deep, of the pressure of business and the neglect of various interests. This point, indeed, is so important that we will state it in another form.

We believe, and we will give an instance directly, that many measures which would scarcely affect the bulk of the community, but which would very largely benefit some class or classes, are not brought forward and passed, solely because no one will be at the trouble to get up the subjects with which they deal. That great lever, self-interest, is absent. The arguments which establish results can be easily and expeditiously mastered in comparison with the time and labour necessary to discover them. Thus, an ordinary mind may master in a few hours the proof of a problem which has puzzled the world for centuries, and which has at last taken a genius a life to demonstrate. It is the same in politics. The Factory Act of 1844 is an illustration. Though the evil was serious and palpable, it had attracted little attention, and this

obviously through want of adequate representation of the sufferers; for when, through the exertions of a few philanthropic men, among whom the name of Shaftesbury deserves especial honour, inquiries were set on foot and the evil in all its magnitude and ramifications proved, the bill was passed in spite of the strenuous opposition of the manufacturers whose interests seemed to be invaded. And herein is a conclusive answer to one of the weakest of the many weak objections brought against the enfranchisement of women, viz. that 'unless any class is coherent enough to give a virtually collective vote, and to make its collective influence felt by its representatives, it cannot produce any collective effect; its atoms are scattered, and their force is lost.' *

But if these words are meant to be taken as they are printed, without qualification—that is to say, if it is an argument applying to a female suffrage based on the same conditions as man's, it is not only weak but utterly preposterous; for it assumes that a very large addition of voters, all of one class, to the present electoral roll, would have no weight in returning half a dozen out of 658 members of parliament; an assumption in direct contradiction to all experience of the

* Letter of S. D. C. in 'Spectator.'

action of people bound together by a common tie of interest.[15]

But it is denied that 'a sex constitutes a "class" or "an order" in the only sense which is material for the purpose of the argument.'* Now, the only essential condition in order that a set of things may constitute a 'class' or an 'order,' is that they should all possess in common some mark or marks which are not possessed by things in general. The mark which decides whether a set of individuals should be considered as a class, with reference to the possession of the franchise, seems to be an identity of interests, not necessarily opposed to the rest of the community, but which affects their own welfare in a much greater degree. When we want to establish a further resemblance, we add some qualifying epithet, such as in the old phrases, the 'working classes,' the 'monied classes,' &c. If this be a true definition of the political use of the word class, it follows that women do form a class, and that, therefore, whatever can be universally predicated of classes may be predicated of woman. But the great bulk of our opponents are constantly reiterating that all classes of the

[15] The answer would, if possible, be even more conclusive, if Mr. Mill had induced the House of Commons and the country to accept Mr. Hare's system of personal representation.

* 'Times.

community should be represented: the inevitable conclusion is that women should be represented.

It will be observed that we have not yet demanded the enfranchisement of women on the principles of the constitution. But we do so now. Her abstract right arising from those principles is so clear that we have assumed it. The *onus probandi* lies with those who would withhold that right. We simply state, as a fact, that women who hold property are entitled to exercise the rights which the law vests in property, and that to withhold them is a flagrant usurpation.

To recapitulate. We have tried to establish—

First, that the only ground which could plausibly be urged for an assumption of exclusive power by man would be the benefit of woman herself.

Secondly, that this proposition, if established, is not sufficient justification without her free and full consent.

Thirdly, that the three grounds on which her political dependence could alone be defended—her past and present condition, her inferiority of intellect in a degree greater than that between the worst and the best of the present electors, and her similar inferiority in morality—are completely opposed to facts.

Fourthly, that the universal law of self-interest,

which has had such an extraordinary illustration in the history of English legislation, renders her enfranchisement an absolute necessity whenever justice and expediency have their legitimate influence.

And, fifthly, that the equality of woman is required by the principles of the constitution.

And now, having gone to what we consider the root of the subject, which is whether one half of the human race has a particle of right to hold the other half in a state of forced subjection, and having answered many incidental objections, we come to consider those which remain, or rather the chief of those which have come under our notice.

The three objections which Mrs. Mill truly says are generally urged with the greatest confidence, and which we will not curtail, either in Mrs. Mill's statement or in her replies, are these:—

'First, the incompatibility of active life with maternity and with the cares of a household; secondly, its alleged hardening effect on the character; and, thirdly, the inexpediency of making an addition to the already excessive pressure of competition in every kind of professional or lucrative employment.

'The first, the maternity argument, is usually laid most stress upon; although, it needs hardly be said, this reason, if it be one, can apply only to

mothers. It is neither necessary nor just to make imperative on women that they shall be either mothers or nothing; or that if they have been mothers once, they shall be nothing else during the whole remainder of their lives. Neither women nor men need any law to exclude them from an occupation, if they have undertaken another which is incompatible with it. No one proposes to exclude the male sex from parliament because a man may be a soldier or sailor in active service, or a merchant whose business requires all his time and energies. Nine-tenths of the occupations of men exclude them *de facto* from public life as effectually as if they were excluded by law; but that is no reason for making laws to exclude even the nine-tenths, much less the remaining tenth. The reason of the case is the same for woman as for man. There is no occasion to make provision by law that a woman shall not carry on the active details of a household, or of the education of children, and at the same time practise a profession, or be elected to parliament. Where incompatibility is real, it will take care of itself; but there is gross injustice in making the incompatibility a pretence for the exclusion of those in whose case it does not exist. And these, if they were free to choose, would be a very large

proportion. The maternity argument deserts its supporters in the case of single women, a large and increasing class of the population; a fact which, it is not irrelevant to remark, by tending to diminish the excessive competition of numbers, is calculated to assist greatly the prosperity of all. There is no inherent reason or necessity that all women should voluntarily choose to devote their lives to one animal function and its consequences. Numbers of women are wives and mothers only because there is no other career open to them, no other occupation for their feelings or their activities. Every improvement in their education, and enlargement of their faculties, everything which renders them more qualified for any other mode of life, increases the number of those to whom it is an injury and an oppression to be denied the choice. To say that women must be excluded from active life because maternity disqualifies them for it, is in fact to say that every other career should be forbidden them in order that maternity may be their only resource.

'But, secondly, it is urged that to give the same freedom of occupation to women as to men would be an injurious addition to the crowd of competitors by whom the avenues to almost all kinds of employment are choked up, and its remuneration depressed. This argument, it is to be observed, does not reach

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the political question. It gives no excuse for withholding from women the rights of citizenship. The suffrage, the jury-box, admission to the legislature and to office, it does not touch. It bears only on the industrial branch of the subject. Allowing it, then, in an economical point of view, its full force; assuming that to lay open to women the employments now monopolised by men would tend, like the breaking down of other monopolies, to lower the rate of remuneration in those employments; let us consider what is the amount of this evil consequence, and what the compensation for it. The worst ever asserted, much worse than is at all likely to be realised, is that, if women competed with men, a man and a woman could not together earn more than is now earned by the man alone. Let us make this supposition, the most unfavourable supposition possible; the joint income of the two would be the same as before, while the woman would be raised from the position of a servant to that of a partner. Even if every woman, as matters now stand, had a claim on some man for support, how infinitely preferable is it that part of the income should be of the woman's earning, even if the aggregate sum were but little increased by it, rather than that she should be compelled to stand aside in order that men may be the sole earners,

and the sole dispensers of what is earned. Even under the present laws respecting the property of women, a woman who contributes materially to the support of the family cannot be treated in the same contemptuously tyrannical manner as one who, however she may toil as a domestic drudge, is a dependant on the man for subsistence.* As for the depression of wages by increase of competition, remedies will be found for it in time. Palliatives might be applied immediately; for instance, a more rigid exclusion of children from industrial employment, during the years in which they ought to be working only to strengthen their bodies and minds for after life. Children are necessarily dependent, and under the power of others; and their labour, being not for themselves, but for the gain of their parents, is a proper subject for legislative regulation. With respect to the future, we neither believe that improvident multiplication, and the consequent excessive difficulty of gaining a subsistence, will always continue, nor that the division of mankind

* 'The truly horrible effect of the present state of the law among the lowest of the working population, is exhibited in those cases of hideous maltreatment of their wives by working men, with which every newspaper, every police report teems. Wretches unfit to have the smallest authority over any living being, have a helpless woman for their household slave. These excesses could not exist if women both earned and had the right to possess a part of the income of the family.'

into capitalists and hired labourers, and the regulation of the reward of labourers mainly by demand and supply, will be for ever, or even much longer, the rule of the world. But so long as competition is the general law of human life, it is tyranny to shut out one half of the competitors. All who have attained the age of self-government have an equal claim to be permitted to sell whatever kind of useful labour they are capable of, for the price it will bring.

'The third objection to the admission of women to political or professional life, its alleged hardening tendency, belongs to an age now past, and is scarcely to be comprehended by people of the present time. There are still, however, persons who say that the world and its avocations render men selfish and unfeeling; that the struggles, rivalries, and collisions of business and of politics make them harsh and unamiable; that if half the species must unavoidably be given up to these things, it is the more necessary that the other half should be kept free from them; that to preserve women from the bad influences of the world is the only chance of preventing men from being wholly given up to them.

'There would have been plausibility in this argument when the world was still in the age of

violence, when life was full of physical conflict, and every man had to redress his injuries or those of others by the sword or by the strength of his arm. Women, like priests, by being exempted from such responsibilities, and from some part of the accompanying dangers, may have been enabled to exercise a beneficial influence. But in the present condition of human life we do not know where those hardening influences are to be found, to which men are subject and from which women are at present exempt. Individuals nowadays are seldom called upon to fight hand to hand, even with peaceful weapons; personal enmities and rivalries count for little in worldly transactions; the general pressure of circumstances, not the adverse will of individuals, is the obstacle men now have to make head against. That pressure, when excessive, breaks the spirits, cramps and sours the feelings, not less of women than of men, since they suffer certainly not less from its evils. There are still quarrels and dislikes, but the sources of them are changed. The feudal chief once found his bitterest enemy in his powerful neighbour, the minister or courtier in his rival for place; but opposition of interest in active life, as a cause of personal animosity, is out of date; the enmities of the present day arise not from

great things but small, from what people say of one another, more than from what they do; and if there are hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, they are to be found among women fully as much as among men. In the present state of civilisation, the notion of guarding women from the hardening influences of the world, could only be realised by secluding them from society altogether. The common duties of common life, as at present constituted, are incompatible with any other softness in women than weakness. Surely weak minds in weak bodies must ere long cease to be even supposed to be either attractive or amiable.'

It is difficult to add to these observations. Such statements as that the possession of the franchise would tend to harden the character and demoralise the mind might of course be multiplied *ad infinitum*. People might insist that the act of voting would shorten their lives, or give their noses a deep blue tinge, or produce some other horrible effect. But it will require something more than dogmatic assertion or mere empty declamation to prove that what is generally admitted to have a humanising effect on man, to render him less wrapt up in his own affairs, and to enlarge the circle of his sympathies, will have a precisely opposite effect on woman. Besides, recent election

disclosures show that woman at present feels the demoralising part of local and party conflicts, while the higher and more ennobling influences are denied her.

The economic part of Mrs. Mill's argument, touching the alleged injurious effect of adding to the pressure of competition, seems to be capable of still stronger statement; for the opening of all employments to women would tend to restrain population. There would be fewer mouths to feed, and consequently a considerable economic gain to the nation. But surely it will never again be said, that by admitting woman's labour man's would produce less, or that woman's, more startling assertion still, would be entirely without return.

The maternity argument touches the question, what is the proper sphere of woman? which is not the inquiry before us. We have only to consider whether man has a right to assume, directly by seizing all political power, and indirectly by getting under his control all the social laws, the function of determining that sphere. The maternity argument, as applied to the possession of the franchise, means that the duties of a mother preclude her from forming an intelligent opinion and giving an intelligent vote. But, obviously, this argument applies, if it applies at all, no less to the

lawyer, the merchant, the clergyman, the mechanic. Besides, no such questions are asked in admitting any other class to the franchise, and it is most unfair to subject woman's claims to these extra gratuitous tests.

But can it mean that the periods of confinement would sometimes interfere with the exercise of her vote? This consideration, indeed, may be a reason for giving her *two* votes, but surely a something which tends to diminish a power which should be possessed in its entirety, is no reason for withholding it altogether. The objection, too, is completely met by introducing voting papers. And it is instructive to notice that the exception taken to voting papers is founded on the fear of fraud and corruption; that is to say, fear of the very low moral condition of those who exercise arbitrary power over more than a half of the species.

Another objection, a very constant objection, to the enfranchisement of woman is that she does not and cannot understand politics. This opens a large question. But here, too, the first and obvious remark is that it is monstrous to require of woman what we do not require of other classes before enfranchising them. The only reply we have seen worthy of notice is that the same test

could not be applied to woman as to man, because in the case of men the present test, though not a direct political test, affords an assumption verified by fact, that about 70 per cent. of the enfranchised possess political knowledge; while in the case of women it would not insure more than about 10 per cent.* All this is equivalent to saying that political knowledge must be a *sine quâ non* of enfranchisement. But the political knowledge of the great bulk of the people of this country is the result, not the cause, of enfranchisement. If, then, women know nothing about a subject which they have both the capacity and industry to understand, but concerning which they have not the power practically to apply those qualities; while others who have no advantage over them, except in having that power, are acquainted with it; and if this knowledge is found to increase when that power is bestowed, the conclusion is, that so long as women have no vote, so long will women have no political knowledge, but that, give them votes, and they will

* The following is the original statement, which appeared in an able article in the *Spectator*:—'The possession of a house of a given rental is not like a political examination,—it is not a *proof* of political capacity, but only, in the case of perhaps 60 or 70 per cent. of ordinary householders, a *presumption* verified by fact. But if applied to women it would probably not be a presumption at all, for the cases in which it would succeed would probably be 9 or 10 per cent., instead of a respectable majority of the whole number.'

acquire knowledge. The phrase, too, has a very convenient generality. When applied to 69 out of the 70 per cent., it merely means that they sometimes read the daily newspapers, take a hasty glance at the articles and the parliamentary debates, and that their opinions have no deeper foundation than a popular or an unpopular newspaper. This kind of knowledge demands neither ability nor industry, and the truth is, that to be able to look after the interests of your own class—a subject on which few people are ignorant—or to choose fit representatives, does not require more than a very limited capacity or limited political knowledge.[16] The motive, however, for acquiring knowledge, political status, man has, but woman has not.

Moreover, our opponents' argument would introduce a totally new doctrine into our electoral system. This would be no argument with us, but it may be with those who oppose female suffrage because it would effect a social revolution. The only personal tests which any statesman advocates are honesty and general intelligence. If these are present, he assumes that the rest will come in due season. Even the Educational Franchise does

[16] 'Le peuple est admirable pour choisir ceux à qui il doit confier quelque partie de son autorité. Il n'a à se déterminer que par des choses qu'il ne peut ignorer, et des faits qui tombent sous les sens. Il

not demand political knowledge as a test of fitness, though, of course, the argument in that case rests on totally different grounds.

But it is not surprising that writers, who, without a single reason, begin by assuming one of the points in dispute, though not the point on which we are now at issue, and assert that politics are not woman's 'sphere,' very frequently add that woman does not and cannot understand politics.[17] This objection we

sait très bien qu'un homme a été souvent à la guerre, qu'il y a eu tel ou tel succès : il est donc très capable d'élire un général. Il sait qu'un juge est assidu, que beaucoup de gens se retirent de son tribunal contents de lui, qu'on ne l'a pas convaincu de corruption : en voilà assez pour qu'il élise un préteur. Il a été frappé de la magnificence ou des richesses d'un citoyen : cela suffit pour qu'il puisse choisir un édile. Toutes ces choses sont des faits dont il s'instruit mieux dans la place publique qu'un monarque dans son palais. Mais saura-t-il conduire une affaire, connoître les lieux, les occasions, les moments, en profiter? Non, il ne le saura pas.'—*Montesquieu.*

[17] We could easily prove the very extraordinary capacity of women for politics. We should be willing to stake the whole controversy on that single issue. Without going as far back as Zenobia, we might adduce a long list of women, who, in every age and country, have had a large, often a pre-eminent, influence on national progress; and an influence not arising out of intrigue, but entirely from political capacity. But our present object is to prove the capacity of women for exercising the suffrage. We are content, therefore, to point out the anomaly of her dependent position in this country, where a woman has parochial votes, where a woman is eligible to be Grand Constable, Grand Chamberlain, Champion of England, &c.; where a woman is the reigning Sovereign; and where a woman was the greatest Sovereign who ever sat on the English throne. A great living statesman says, 'Queen Elizabeth is the greatest of English, perhaps of all modern, Sovereigns. In a period remarkable for long and sanguinary wars, she made her name respected abroad, without a waste of blood or treasure; and, in a time of great political ferment, she maintained the most absolute authority at home, without any loss of the affections of her people. She

should leave to fall of itself, if it did not suggest other issues. One is that the study of politics has nothing in common with any other study. This is tacitly assumed when it is said that woman's 'instinct' is against the possession and exercise of the franchise.* Within certain limits, it is true that special faculties, or rather a special development of certain faculties, are necessary to extraordinary success in some one subject; but to get a moderate knowledge of any subject does not require a peculiar turn of mind. Identical mental processes may be, nay, to a certain extent, must be, employed on all subjects, politics or cookery; and it is a glaring *petitio principii* to say that women would have the slightest difficulty in acquiring sufficient political knowledge to exercise an intelligent vote. Besides, the objection all along assumes that political knowledge is very generally distributed among men, than which nothing can be more untrue. The theorems which are the very alphabet of every one who has anything like a sound knowledge of the science of politics—even such a knowledge as a good lawyer or a good doctor has

obtained glory without conquest, and unlimited power without odium.' '*The English Government and Constitution:*' *Earl Russell.*

* 'It is a just instinct which has prevented the vast majority of educated ladies from claiming, immediately or prospectively, the fatal gift of electoral power; and it will be an evil day for English homes when Parliament shall be induced to confer it upon them.'—*Times.*

of his profession—are daily outraged by the paid writers who profess to instruct the present voters. The large majority of the articles in the daily and weekly newspapers, clearly prove one thing, that they are written by men whose opinions on the philosophy of politics, or any abstruse problem in the whole range of political economy — trades' unions, strikes, population, pauperism, &c.—are utterly worthless. But the bulk of the people—the men to whom, too often, the newspaper is the only teacher—know even less than the majority of public writers, though their knowledge may not really be less reliable.[18]

Be this as it may, however, we repeat that it is most unjust to say that woman must understand politics before getting the franchise, because this test is not applied to man. As a man's faculties and time are limited, he devotes his attention to the

[18] The progress of political knowledge is likely to continue slow when leading articles are so often mere unhealthy *réchauffés* of the facts and reasonings of others. The facts are mis-stated, and the reasonings perverted. Nor is it conducive to political progress that while the speeches in Parliament of Mr. This and my Lord That are printed *verbatim*, those of Mr. Mill are cut down and printed in the third person. Yet this is what the *Times* has done almost invariably with Mr. Mill's speeches, notably with his splendid speech on Reform last session! Those who read the *Times* solely for its reports—and these are probably nearly all its educated readers, except such as regard it as a pretty reliable, though ever changing barometer of the political and immoral atmosphere—were not more disappointed than angered at so extraordinary a suppression.

things which concern him. The men best informed in politics are those engaged in political life ; the next, the middle classes who hold the chief power; the next, the enfranchised lower classes; and the last the unenfranchised classes. Political knowledge seems to vary with political power, and assuming that the unenfranchised—those whom we now contemplate enfranchising—are, as a class, superior in political knowledge to women, it is because, first every man is able to get a vote by slightly improving his position, and, secondly, because he is not surrounded by persons who constantly tell him that politics are above his comprehension. It is this constant reiteration of woman's unfitness for politics which is the most effective of the many specious devices by which man persuades woman of her inferiority.

The training begins early. Boys learn, or rather they are supposed to learn, Greek, Latin, and Mathematics; but girls are told that these subjects are of immense difficulty and priceless value, though utterly beyond their capacity. The girls naturally believe those whom they have been taught to respect, and, having no means of testing man's pretensions, fall into the further error of believing that men generally have a profound knowledge of them. The tasks, they are informed,

which should occupy girls, should be neither so hard nor so important. Years roll on. The boys, grown into young men, 'talk politics' furiously, much to the astonishment and admiration of their sisters. Whence comes all this knowledge, so ready on the tongue? Whence but out of those huge volumes with the funnily shaped letters? The young men talk on glibly enough, but of politics they usually know about as much as they do of Chinese, or if they are a little above the average, as they do of the Latin and the Greek which, through no fault of theirs but through another little 'custom' of man, they have only touched with the tips of their finger. The girls, however, who have been carefully preserved from learning even the meaning of the word politics, believe that the one brother's adoration of the Constitution and Mr. Disraeli, between whom he seems to see some startling connection; and the other's vehement rants about Brutus, and Timoleon, and the rights of man, are each perfect in its kind, the one the very essence of profound reasoning, the other of noble eloquence.

Meanwhile the girls are brought up with the one idea, 'marriage,' continually dangled before their minds. Their whole training is directed to fit them to become the wife of one of the 'nobler sex.'

'To endeavour'—we quote Mrs. Ellis, a popular and most amiable writer of the school of subserviency—'to endeavour before every other earthly thing, and next to the salvation of her soul, to obtain and keep her husband's confidence,' (no mention being made of the corresponding duty of the husband,) is to be the end-all and the be-all of a wife's life.[19]

[19] These are a few of the doctrines of a school whose disciples are numbered by hundreds of thousands. We still quote Mrs. Ellis:—'It is unquestionably the inalienable right of all men, whether ill or well, rich or poor, wise or foolish, to be treated with deference, and made much of in their own houses.' 'The love of woman appears to have been created solely to minister; that of man to be ministered unto.' 'If his taste is for neatness and order, for the absence of servants, and for perfect quiet, it would be absolute cruelty to such a man to find his house in confusion, and to have to call in servants to clear this thing and the other away after his return.' 'In the case of a highly gifted woman, even where there is an equal or superior degree of talent possessed by her husband, nothing can be more injudicious, or more fatal to her happiness, than an exhibition even of the least disposition to presume upon such gifts. Let her husband be once subjected to a feeling of jealousy of her importance, which, without the strictest watchfulness, will be liable to arise, and her force of mind and her free agency are alike destroyed for the remainder of her life.'

Good God! what a picture of man's intense selfishness and egotism, drawn by one of his most enthusiastic devotees! Mrs. Ellis, however, when she subdues feeling, and looks at the facts before her, seems to be almost of our opinion:—

'Men who have been thus educated by foolish and indulgent mothers; who have been placed at public schools, where the influence, the character, and the very name of woman was a by-word for contempt; who have been afterwards associated with sisters who were capricious, ignorant, and vain—such men are very unjustly blamed for being selfish, domineering, and tyrannical to the other sex. In fact *how should they be otherwise? It is a common thing to complain of the selfishness of men, but I have often thought, on looking candidly at*

Of course to men no such ideas are addressed. They however, like women, have their 'characteristics;' and riotousness and libertinism, provided always they are sown with the usual crop of 'wild oats,' are practically held very venial transgressions. If the prodigal at last condescends, meanwhile assisting to keep up prostitution, vitiating his offspring, and inflicting other injuries on society, to choose one of the inferior sex for his wife, and, in return for her entire subservience to him, and for her valuing his life 'next to the salvation of her soul,' treats her kindly and keeps the marriage vow, he goes down to the grave with the reputation of being a model husband, and an excellent man!

The assertion, that the equality of woman is one man's crotchet, Mr. Mill's, is common enough, though there is no argument in it, unless it be implied in the word crotchet.* But an opinion

their early lives, and reflecting how little cultivation of the heart is blended with what is popularly called the best education, the wonder should be that men are not more selfish still.'

So according to the testimony of a hostile witness, the present system which the 'Times' believes it would be fatal to upset, necessarily produces women who are weak and subservient, and men who are selfish and tyrannical.

* 'Perhaps a paradox is not absolutely condemned by the circumstance that only a single member can be found to propose or to support it. Mr. Mill has, in exotic phrase, "the courage of his opinions," including several opinions besides the dogma of indiscriminate suffrage.' —*Saturday Review.*

which was held by Plato, by Voltaire, by Burke, Condorcet, Sydney Smith, Dugald Stewart, and Bentham, and which is maintained by a host of distinguished contemporary men and women, cannot be called one man's crotchet or one man's idea.[20]

It has been said that representation without taxation is unreasonable; that since married women are not taxed, they are not entitled to representation; and that if it be replied that they are taxed through their husbands, the answer is that they are also represented through their husbands.

The assertion that married women are not taxed, can only mean that they do not possess property. Then the argument amounts to this:—

[20] Pitt, Coleridge, and some European statesmen and thinkers of the last century, opposed universal suffrage on the ground that it necessarily led to the enfranchisement of women. Talleyrand could not reconcile the exclusion of women on any abstract principles; and M. de Tocqueville expresses himself to the same effect. The petitions which have been presented to parliament for the enfranchisement of women, though containing many of the most eminent names in science, literature, and art, are by no means adequate evidence either of the extent or character of the opinion throughout the country.

Nor have electoral rights always and everywhere been denied to women. In the modern state of Victoria they were granted by an oversight, and afterwards withdrawn; but they have been partially, and, we hope, permanently, ceded in Austria and Sweden.

The 'Daily News,' an able advocate of the enfranchisement of women, well says:—'The Legislature is about to create wholly new franchises. Mr. Mill does not introduce the element of sex into the question; all he does is to ask that no one else shall do so. He says to Mr. Disraeli—If you are going to attach the suffrage to occupation, or ratepaying, or any other condition, do not make exceptions by using the term "man" in your Bill, but speak of "persons."'

the law made by man arbitrarily withholds from woman the power of possessing property: those should not be represented who do not possess property: therefore, married women should not be represented. Thus, one act of spoliation is urged as a justification for another. Representation without taxation may or may not be unreasonable when all human beings are allowed to hold property; but to exclude married women from holding property (all share in making the law being denied her) and then, on the ground of that exclusion, to refuse her political power, is, practically, to say that two wrongs make a right. But supposing it be just to prevent married women from holding property, the premise that representation without taxation is unreasonable, must be rigorously demonstrated, not coolly assumed. Besides, if the law had been made to exclude men, the same argument, *mutatis mutandis*, might be applied. This habit, among certain writers, of taking common phrases and using them in cases which their original framers had not in view, and which bear no resemblance to those which gained them general recognition, is a very fruitful source of the most stupendous blunders.[21]

[21] 'A great multitude of people are continually talking of the Law of Nature; and then they go on giving you their sentiments about

Another objection arising in the habit just mentioned, is that female suffrage would introduce strife and heart-burning into families. This is an assumption against all available experience. A vote has not this effect in the case of father and son, or husband and father-in-law, or husband and brother-in-law, and it seems to be forgotten that educating woman as a being having the same feelings, the same virtues, the same weaknesses, and the same aspirations as man, will probably make her at least as tolerant as man, who does not, as a rule, coerce, or wish to coerce, the members of his own family. In all propositions which are at variance with experience, the *onus probandi* lies with the objectors, who must adduce something different from unsupported assertions.

We have now gone through our list of objections:[22] for the assertion that women do not

what is right, and what is wrong ; and these sentiments, you are to understand, are so many chapters and sections of the Law of Nature.

'Instead of the phrase, Law of Nature, you have sometimes Law of Reason, Right Reason, Natural Justice, Natural Equity, Good Order. Any of them will do equally well. This latter is most used in politics. The three last are much more tolerable than the others, because they do not very explicitly claim to be anything more than phrases : they insist but feebly upon the being looked upon as so many positive standards of themselves, and seem content to be taken, upon occasion, for phrases expressive of the conformity of the thing in question to the proper standard, whatever that may be.'—*Bentham.*

[22] It has been urged that if woman is given the franchise she must be admitted to parliament. But this is a *non sequitur*. So many new considerations are imported into the second case, that it is impos-

demand the suffrage, though it contains considerable truth, has no weight as an objection. Mrs. Mill well observes: 'The vast population of Asia do not desire or value, probably would not accept, political liberty, nor the savages of the forest, civilisation; which does not prove that either of those things are undesirable for them, or that they will not at some future time enjoy it.' Obviously the argument founded on the content of women

sible to deduce the one from the other. The opponents of this admission, however, might plead a precedent: for the clergy of the Church of England who have the franchise, have not the privilege of sitting in parliament. The 'Contemporary Review' shows that many of the objections which sound most plausible, might be brought against priestly enfranchisement if the privilege were now for the first time to be conferred:—

'We should be told that clergymen had no business with politics; that it was their province to attend to spiritual matters; and that they ought to confine themselves to their proper sphere; that if they were permitted to participate in political affairs, it would deteriorate from the sanctity of their character, and be a hindrance in the discharge of their special duties; that the passions roused by political contests were inconsistent with that spirit of meekness and holiness which we look for in preachers of the Gospel; that if clergymen were allowed to vote, the next demand would be that they should sit in the House of Commons; with many other objections of a similar character, which it does not need a very lively fancy to suggest. But all these imaginary evils are found not to exist practically. Clergymen are not hindered in the performance of their spiritual duties by their participation in political power, and it is no deterioration from the sacredness of their calling, to give them a voice in mundane affairs. They would feel it to be unjust were they deprived of the right to hold political opinions, which would be implied by the exclusion of all persons of their class from the franchise, but they do not appear to regard it as any hardship that the exigencies of their special vocation are thought to render it expedient that they should not sit in the House of Commons.'

would equally apply to the women all over Africa, who are perfectly content, though they are slaves; and to those of Hindostan, who mingle personal indecencies with law and religion.

No habit, indeed, is more easily acquired than that of subserviency. The fulsome and slavish praise which writers, particularly in the seventeenth century, lavished on their patrons, the degrading ceremonies which waited on monarchs, and the tyranny which men of all ages and of all countries have endured, are all examples of this weakness of humanity. But let not acquiescence be too much counted on. The political dependence of women has been tacitly assumed, not rigorously demonstrated. The opinions and practices of our forefathers, have been handed down from generation to generation, rather as a creed to be believed, than as a proposition to be proved. In such cases the awakening is sudden. A few experiments of Toricelli overturned an opinion which had been held from the days of Aristotle. A moment, and what no man could be found to dispute, no man could be found to affirm. Signs of some such awakening are thickening around us. A man, eminent for his learning, his depth of thought, his contempt of ridicule, his nobleness of aim, his fixedness of purpose, has been returned

to parliament; returned while plainly avowing the right of women to representation. By him, on March 7, 1866, a petition signed by 1,500 ladies was presented to parliament.[23] On March 9 of the present year, Mr. Ewart and Mr. Russell Gurney presented petitions from many thousands of the inhabitants of Dumfries, Oxford, and Cambridge. And on April 5, Mr. Mill again presented a petition, this time with 3,000 signatures. It is a singular fact, which bears upon the present subject, by showing how quickly strong feelings may take the place of indifference, that, in the year 1830, only three petitions were presented to the House of Commons on the question of reform, and that in 1832 reform was carried to save revolution. That the time is approaching when a hard struggle

[23] 'It may appear, at first sight, as though in proportion to the millions of Englishwomen who live happily under our laws, or who groan under all the miseries of wife-beating and other social evils, without a thought of how their condition might be affected by legislation, fifteen hundred women are too small a number to be worthy of a moment's consideration. But if we reflect a little on the peculiar position of women, and their usual ways of thinking—on their habitual reticence on all subjects which they are accustomed to consider as beyond their own sphere, their timidity and dread of exposing their names to public observation, their deference even to the most unreasonable prejudices of those who have any claim on their affections, their clinging to old associations, and their regard for the opinion of all who are even remotely connected with them—we shall see reason to think that these fifteen hundred ladies, who have not hesitated to affix their names to a public document, and to pronounce a decided opinion, open to the controversy and criticism of all the world, must represent an extraordinarily important phase of thought.'—*Westminster Review.*

will be begun for the destruction of the political dependence of women, we are deeply grateful to believe. The characteristics of the age point to such a consummation. The spread of education among both sexes, among the people, who have always been the lever of every great social revolution, the rise of the cheap press, the progress of the arts which every day tend to lessen mere household duties, the gradual diminution of physical force, and the levelling spirit which is abroad, and which needs only just guidance to scatter every obstacle, all move in the same direction. And in enfranchising women, let us inaugurate a nobler era in the history of the human race. Let the strong no longer tyrannise over the weak ; but let man and woman, united by identity of interest, by a common nature, and a tangible respect for honour and religion, fight out the battle of life, side by side.

Selfishness, we believe, is the root, whatever nourishing tendrils there may be, of nearly all the evils, which complacent statesmen, availing themselves of high authority, declare that 'flesh is heir to.' We repudiate the heirship. We do not believe that one half of mankind was born to exercise unlimited power over the other half, nor that a fraction of the human race was born to

grow fat and prosper on the leanness and poverty of the immense mass. On the contrary, we believe that comfort and happiness, neither of which can exist without self-reliance and self-respect, are within the reach of all, if the strong and the rich will relax oppressive laws, and breathe a more liberal spirit into future legislation. Then, and not till then, we shall have laws which are without favour and without affection. Then, and not till then, we shall see a more equal distribution of happiness. Then, and not till then, we shall be near realising the quaint fancy of the father of poets, that on Jove's high throne there are two urns, the one of evil and the other of good, from which he impartially distributes ills and blessings to all mankind.

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